

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

Report on Employers' Needs in the West Side Neighborhood, Saint Paul, Minnesota

A CONSORTIUM PROJECT OF: Augsburg College; College of St. Catherine; Hamline University; Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs; Macalester College; Metropolitan State University; Minneapolis Community College; Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program; University of Minnesota (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs; Children, Youth and Family Consortium; Minnesota Extension Service); University of St. Thomas; and Minneapolis community and neighborhood representatives.

CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION

Center for Urban and Regional Affairs
University of Minnesota
330 Humphrey Center

**Report on Employers' Needs in
the West Side Neighborhood,
Saint Paul, Minnesota**

Prepared by
Patricia Gladchild
Riverview Economic Development Association
November 1997

*This report [NPCR 1078] is also available at the following internet
address: <http://freenet.msp.mn.us/org/npcr>*

November 1997

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization (NPCR) supported the work of the author of this report but has not reviewed it for publication. The content is solely the responsibility of the author and is not necessarily endorsed by NPCR.

NPCR is coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota. St. Paul projects are funded in part by St. Paul Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), The St. Paul Foundation, and St. Paul Companies. Minneapolis projects are funded in part by an Urban Community Service Program grant administered by the U.S. Department of Education.

NPCR

330 Hubert H. Humphrey Center
301 - 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455

phone: 612/625-1020

e-mail: npcr@freenet.msp.mn.us

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Project Description | 3 |
| Objective | 3 |
| Scope | 3 |
| Methods | 3 |
| Completion Status | 4 |
| Results | 6 |
| Introduction | 6 |
| Description of Participants | 6 |
| Employers' Concerns | 6 |
| Employment Needs | 9 |
| Employment Practices | 10 |
| Possibilities for Future Action | 13 |
| Creating a Network/Association and Promoting the Industrial Park | 13 |
| Employer Forums | 14 |
| Eliminate Barriers to Industrial Employment | 16 |
| Resource Directory | 16 |
| Questions for Further Investigation | 17 |
| Basic Education | 17 |
| The Role of Unions | 17 |
| The Role of Vocational/Technical Schools | 17 |
| The Role of Professional and Industry Organizations | 17 |
| Differences Between Large and Small Employers | 17 |
| Community Connections | 18 |
| Appendix A: Input from Local Retailers | 19 |
| Appendix B: Interview Questions | 21 |
| Appendix C: Sample Letters to Participants | 23 |
| Letter Sent After Interview Has Been Completed | 24 |
| Letter Sent After Some Contact but Not Complete Interview | 25 |
| Appendix D: Interview Results | 26 |
| Description of Participants | 26 |
| Employers' Concerns and Needs | 30 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1: Final Status of Interviews | 4 |
| Table 2: Summary of Employers' Concerns | 8 |
| Table 3: Turnover and Need for Applicants | 10 |
| Table 4: Satisfaction with Applicants | 10 |
| Table 5: Resources Used for Posting and Placement | 11 |
| Table 6: Training Programs | 12 |
| Table 7: Types of Companies | 26 |
| Table 8: Years on the West Side | 27 |
| Table 9: Ownership of Company | 27 |
| Table 10: Staff Position of Respondents | 28 |
| Table 11: Number of Employees | 28 |
| Table 12: Location of Work Sites | 29 |
| Table 13: Number of Respondents with a Unionized Workplace | 29 |

Project Description

Objective

The initiation of this research by the Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA) and the West Side Employment Network (WSEN) grew out of an overall desire to find out more about the industrial park. While REDA has worked closely with small retailers, restaurateurs, and new entrepreneurs, it has not yet been involved in program development or coordination designed to support the businesses in the industrial park. Because this area is an important asset to the health of the neighborhood and the city of St. Paul, and since there is a flurry of activity in employment programming stimulated by welfare policy changes, this appeared to be a good time to learn.

The objective of the project was to obtain information from employers on the West Side in order to develop or coordinate resources to assist in hiring, retention, and training of new employees, and to support the industrial park and local retailers more generally. Since REDA already has a strong base of information about retailers and restaurants in the area, a priority was set to focus on acquiring interviews from businesses in the industrial park while still getting some input from retailers in the neighborhood.

Scope

The project was funded by the Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization program at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) at the University of Minnesota. The emphasis was on interviewing industrial employers. There was also a focus group of small retailers from the Concord Street area as well as input from members of the Smith-Dodd Business Association during their July business meeting. (See Appendix A, p. 19.) The size of the grant was appropriate for gathering basic information which can offer a foothold for future action rather than conducting comprehensive research on the industrial park as a whole.

Methods

An advisory committee of human resource staff members from the industrial park assisted REDA staffing outlining the interview questions.¹ Jane Miller and Anne Briseno from REDA reviewed and approved the final version of the questions.

REDA supplied a list of approximately 365 West Side businesses which was narrowed down to focus on companies in the industrial park in manufacturing, printing, health care, and a few small businesses. Nonprofit organizations, except for one health care provider, were excluded. The phone calls to set up an interview were directed at the staff person who handles human resources for the company, regardless of their title. Since many of the interview questions were about employment issues and practices, this was the logical choice. (The interview questions are

¹ The advisory committee consisted of: Sharon Dibb, Aero System Engineering; Ann Moreno, Gross Given Mfg. Co./Automatic Products; and Martina Mendez, El Burrito Mercado.

presented in Appendix B, p. 21.) Interviews were scheduled and conducted either on the phone or in person, according to the preference of the respondent. If contact was made with the appropriate person but they would or could not schedule an interview, information was collected at that point, as time permitted. A thank you letter was sent to all participants, along with a REDA or WSEN brochure if appropriate. (For copies of the letters, see Appendix C, p. 23.)

Completion Status

The original goal was to interview people from 20-25 businesses in the industrial park out of an initial target group of 38. Since this was not a formal sample but a strategic group of businesses, the results should be considered exploratory rather than conclusive. That is, the information collected is good for making initial decisions about what sort of programming is likely to be supportive of the industrial park, but it would be unfounded and inaccurate to make generalizations about employers in the area based on these results.

Table 1: Final Status of Interviews

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <u>Full or Partial Interview:</u> | |
| Interviews completed | 13 |
| Partial interview or brief phone conversation: | 14 |
| • No employment problems or business concerns | 8 |
| • Too busy to be interviewed | 5 |
| • Company in midst of change | 1 |
| TOTAL | 27 |
| <u>No Interview:</u> | |
| Branch office of large corporation – not interested in local affairs | 2 |
| No longer on West Side | 2 |
| Attempted but failed to contact | 7 |
| TOTAL | 11 |

Thirty-one businesses were reached by phone. Of those, two were no longer on the West Side, and two refused to participate because they were branch offices of large corporations and not interested in local economic development. Information was obtained from a total of 27 businesses. Of those, there were 13 complete interviews; the remaining 14 businesses contacted did not schedule interviews but gave information over the phone in a partial interview or short telephone conversation.

Interviews were harder to schedule than anticipated. While most people were friendly once reached by phone, it was rare for messages to be returned, even after leaving several. Most employees who have responsibilities for human resources appeared to be quite busy, especially if they have additional duties. The reasons for giving only a partial interview were: the contact person maintained that the company was not facing any employment problems or other serious issues at that time; there simply was no time available to give to a research project; and in one case the company was in the midst of major reorganization and would have been unable to answer many of the interview questions. Most people were friendly and interested in hearing about REDA and WSEN activities.

Results

Introduction

The industrial park on the West Side of St. Paul is a valuable resource for the neighborhood and the city. It is a well-maintained and stable home to many growing businesses, some of which have provided economic activity to the area since the turn of the century. Many businesses employ large numbers of long-term and entry-level workers. Even though the industrial park is undoubtedly a major asset for the city and the neighborhood, there is no association or organization which gives these companies a voice and advocates for employers' needs. By and large, employers do not know each other and do not know whether the problems they face are shared by others in the area.

The information that follows begins to sketch out the concerns these businesses have, many of which are shared. Since the intent of the research was to find out as much as possible about businesses in the industrial park, information from both complete interviews and partial interviews or brief conversations is presented here. When appropriate the answers are presented separately. Suggestions for future action which arose from conversations with employers are presented in the following section, Possibilities for Future Action (p. 13).

Description of Participants

The companies which agreed to participate are diverse. They are manufacturers, printers, health care providers and other businesses (See Table 7, p. 26). Some are new to the West Side, being in the industrial less than ten years, while one company has been in its present location for over a hundred years (See Table 8, p. 27). No companies were owned by a parent corporation. Only four of the twenty-seven respondents worked strictly as human resource staff. Twenty-one had other responsibilities in addition to handling personnel matters, though two of these indicated that there is a human resource department at another site (See Table 10, p. 28). The number of employees ranged from three to over 500 (See Table 11, p. 28), ten had no other work sites, while six had sites in other states (See Table 12, p. 29). Just a little under half of the employers reported that their work place was unionized (See Table 13, p. 29). None of the employers contacted keeps track of employees' place of residence. Guesses ranged from none or very few to about half or more of their work force living on the West Side.

Employers' Concerns

The two general areas mentioned most often by employers as ongoing business concerns were: 1) obtaining basic human resources information and guidance; and 2) marketing/getting new business.

We are a small company and we need information on human resources in general. For instance, about the Disability Act, and federal and state requirements regarding human resources. Human resources are our most important resource, yet we do not have a department or specialist. [office manager]

We're always seeking to expand our customer base. [human resource staff]

Concern about overall economic conditions and frustration with recruiting entry-level workers were the next most frequently reported concerns.

Competition is really our main challenge these days. It is a very competitive business. Increasing costs make it hard to hold our costs down. [office manager]

Recruiting [entry-level workers] is certainly a struggle. [human resource staff]

Finding a good work force is the biggest thing. We want people with a strong work ethic, who will show up for work 40 hours a week. [production manager]

Not surprisingly, different concerns tend to be voiced by different kinds of employers. Though there certainly are exceptions, the need for more support for human resources is expressed by smaller businesses while frustration with finding entry-level applicants is reported by mid-sized or larger manufacturing companies. It is noteworthy, however, that even though nine of the companies contacted employ over 100 workers, only four have staff dedicated exclusively to human resources. Consequently, it would seem that support in this area is something that would apply to a range of employers. Other issues of concern to business are recruiting experienced applicants, the lack of basic education and job skills in entry-level applicants, day care for unusual hours and second/third shifts, and the absence of opportunities to meet people from other businesses in the industrial park. (For complete interview notes, see Appendix D, p. 26.)

Something the community could do that would support us is work to get reliable day care in the area. Our employees work odd shifts, which many people like, but that can be a problem for day care. We need both quality and availability. [human resource staff]

We need basic referrals and contacts in the industrial park. When we need a good lawyer, where do we find one? If I knew other employers in the industrial park I would ask them. And I drive around and see that other businesses use products we distribute, but do we have connections with them? No. We just don't know them. [company president]

Table 2: Summary of Employers' Concerns²

| <u>Business Concern:</u> | <u>Number of Employers³</u> |
|---|---|
| Human resource information | 6 |
| Seeking new business/marketing | 5 |
| Financial/economic conditions | 4 |
| Recruiting entry-level applicants | 4 |
| Recruiting experienced applicants | 3 |
| Basic education and job skills for entry-level workers | 3 |
| Day care for all shifts | 3 |
| Meeting people from other businesses in the industrial park | 3 |
| Property taxes | 2 |
| Need bilingual staff or services | 2 |
| Layoffs hurt retention | 2 |
| Inadequate bus service | 2 |
| Coping with rapid growth | 1 |

² This summary includes responses from Q8, Q17, and Q19. (See Appendix A, p. 19) These questions were directed toward general information about problems businesses are facing, or resources they need for growth. Similar responses to different questions given by the same respondent were only counted once.

³ This includes responses from both complete and partial interviews.

Employment Needs

The companies included in this project vary in their need for new employees and their satisfaction with applicants. Twelve, or almost half, of the 27 businesses reported that they have a stable work force and do very little hiring. Eight more said that they have a core group of long-term stable workers but have a hard time filling entry-level jobs. Four companies noted that there are certain positions requiring specific training or experience which are hard to fill, and three hire experienced employees exclusively. (See Table 3, p. 10.)

We have high turnover. I hold three open houses a year where people come and turn in their applications and I interview them right there. We do have a pool of established long term workers. The problem is getting the new worker to get past that lay off period. I do believe we have a lot to offer employees. [human resource staff]

We are small and have very low turnover. We have extremely good retention at all skill levels. [office manager]

We have about 50 employees and do not have much turnover or much trouble filling positions. [office manager]

We have trouble filling entry-level warehouse positions. We have long-term employees too, but we just have trouble getting applicants for entry-level openings. We have had trouble with new hires being unreliable workers. [office manager]

Eleven employers discussed their satisfaction with the quality of applicants. Those who advertise only for skilled or experienced workers said that they are generally satisfied with applicants. **However, all respondents who need to fill entry-level jobs on a regular basis reported dissatisfaction with entry-level applicants.** (See Table 4, p. 10.)

Yes, there are a lot of problems. Showing up on time and leaving on time; taking the designated break and only the designated break; not walking off the job; actually working. It is an attitude. The company hasn't tried to deal with these issues. [human resource staff]

Just the overall work ethic is missing. Sometimes once someone walks in the door they want to know what the company is going to do for them without trying to further themselves or prove what they can do. The second thing is that some people have unstable personal lives and are so burdened by problems in their families that they have trouble with attendance. [production manager]

We are just having trouble getting bodies for entry-level jobs. I know there are non-English speakers who could do the jobs but they have to be able to read the specs. [human resource staff]

Interviewing skills are very poor. People don't show interest or ability or don't show a willingness to work in teams. Some people don't finish the initial survey. [human resource staff]

Table 3: Turnover and Need for Applicants⁴

| | <u>Number of Employers⁵</u> |
|---|---|
| Stable work force--little hiring | 12 |
| Core group of long-term employees bit need people for entry-level positions | 8 |
| Difficult to fill one specific position ⁶ | 4 |
| Hire only experienced applicants | 3 |
| High turnover – need entry-level workers | 1 |

Table 4: Satisfaction with Applicants⁷

| | <u>Number of Employers⁸</u> |
|--|---|
| Applicants are generally qualified | 6 |
| Applicants are generally not qualified | 5 |
| TOTAL | 11 |

Employment Practices

The most popular means of advertising open positions were placing advertisements in the Minneapolis Star Tribune and the St. Paul Pioneer Press, posting positions with the state's Job Service, and word of mouth. (See Table 5, p. 11.) Hiring is most often handled by a manager along with the direct supervisor of the new hire. Only six of the participating companies reported a human resources department or specialist, and two of those were at another work site. Use of on-site training programs was mixed. When employees cannot learn to perform required tasks any other way, employers developed training programs. Just as often, employers hire experienced people and provide a company orientation. About the same proportion offer only minimal training. (See Table 6, p. 12.) Use of the vocational/technical schools is somewhat uncommon, though use of printing and medical assistants programs was reported. The Printing Industry of Minnesota as

⁴ This table includes responses from Q9.

⁵ This includes responses from both complete and partial interviews. Multiple responses are recorded; for instance, the same company may have a stable workforce with little hiring but find certain positions difficult to fill. Both responses would be recorded.

⁶ Positions mentioned were transcriptionists, sales, and customer service representatives.

⁷ This table includes responses to Q14.

⁸ Note that this information was obtained only from complete interviews, and two respondents did not have a comment to make on this topic.

well as the printing unions have training programs that are well-known by printing companies, but other than that familiarity with training programs was low. Employee incentive programs are common, with wages increasing rapidly after demonstrated ability and responsibility.

Table 5: Resources Used for Posting and Placement⁹

| | <u>Number of Employers</u> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Large local newspapers | 7 |
| State job service | 6 |
| Word of mouth | 5 |
| Internal postings | 4 |
| Temp agencies | 3 |
| Community organizations | 2 |
| Vo/Tech schools | 2 |
| Employment agencies | 2 |
| Neighborhood newspapers | 2 |
| Colleges | 1 |

⁹ This table includes responses to Q10.

Table 6: Training Programs

| | <u>Number of Employers</u> ¹⁰ |
|---|---|
| Extensive training on-site | 4 |
| Train for specific job but not for general skills | 4 |
| Minimal training on-site | 5 |
| TOTAL | 13 |

¹⁰ This table includes responses from the complete interviews only. Information on training was not obtained in partial interviews.

Possibilities for Future Action

The following list was compiled from statements made by participants in the study.

Creating a Network/Association and Promoting the Industrial Park

The industrial park is clearly a valuable resource for the city of St. Paul and an important source of stability for the neighborhood. It is surprising and perhaps a little troubling that there is no business association to represent this important area. There are three reasons why the creation of a business association or organization would be beneficial to the area:

- A business association could advocate within the neighborhood, city, and state for actions and policies which would support the industrial park;
- A business association would provide fertile ground for collaboration between employers on mutually advantageous projects;
- A business association would facilitate collaboration between businesses and other groups.

There seems to be a desire to get to know others in the industrial park, but without a mechanism for doing so most business people are unlikely to put aside their immediate work responsibilities and take the initiative. Finding time to make connections would be more likely to occur if there was a clear business reason for doing so. Some ideas for projects which might interest groups of employers are:

- Introduce businesses to innovative employers;
- Organize vocational English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to prepare area residents for entry-level positions within the industrial park;
- Set up mentoring relationships between young and more established businesses;
- Pool resources to hire a human resources person to work for several small companies or provide some other shared personnel resource; or
- Create a showcase somewhere in the neighborhood for local businesses, perhaps highlighting those which have been in the area for many years.

Employer Forums

An idea that has widespread appeal is regular employer forums or seminars. The WSEN has already hosted a few of these; that initial success provides a good basis for expansion. Forums would serve to both bring employers together and provide useful information. Perhaps some of the businesses in the area could be invited to present at the forums, or there could be a different featured company each time. The list of topics presented below comes directly from employers. Some topics have appeal only to certain groups. For instance, a session on the deterrence of shoplifting and crime would be of interest to retailers, while environmental issues may be of interest to printers or manufacturers. Other topics, such as general human resource practices, would be likely to appeal to a broader audience.

Possible Forum Topics

- I. Legal Issues:
 - INS requirements and procedures
 - Americans with Disabilities Act
 - Sexual harassment
 - Discrimination
 - Child support payments
 - Worker's compensation
 - Federal and state requirements regarding human resources
 - Updates on changes in government procedures
- II. Safety Issues for Retailers:
 - Shoplifting
 - Crime prevention
 - Graffiti
- III. Human Resources:
 - Employee retention
 - Training
 - Performance evaluation
 - Insurance
 - Innovative ways to recognize employees
- IV. Other:
 - Environmental issues
 - Property taxes
 - Marketing support/strategies

Eliminate Barriers to Industrial Employment

Employers reported three things as barriers to successful hiring and retention of good employees:

- Lack of basic education and fundamental job skills (work ethic) for groups of people who could be good entry-level workers;
- No quality day care available for unusual hours or second/third shift;
- Inadequate bus service resulting from recent cutbacks.

While employers are able to advocate and voice their needs, providing these things must come from other sources.

Resource Directory

Some businesses, particularly those without a human resources staff person, have expressed a desire for a directory that would help them find resources they and their employees need. There are clear strengths and weaknesses to this option. On one hand, it would provide tangible support for businesses and could provide a means for sharing knowledge about personnel issues. On the other hand, a directory would need to be updated regularly and does not necessarily lead to businesses getting to know each other. Perhaps a directory or manual would be most effective if combined with some other program or forum. If attendance at a forum or joining an association meant receiving a copy of an employers' resource directory, for instance, it might be a powerful tool. The Midway Chamber of Commerce is currently experimenting with a directory for employers and it would be wise to take advantage of their experience when considering publishing a directory.

Questions for Further Investigation

Many new questions emerged from simply talking with employers. These questions are presented below, grouped to form areas for possible further study. They are not listed in any particular order and should be pursued as indicated by events and the needs of the relevant communities.

Basic Education:

While employers reported that the training and education of applicants for skilled positions is satisfactory, there are people who fall through the cracks in the system and are not qualified for entry-level employment. With the approaching deadlines of new welfare-to-work policies the readiness of new applicants for work becomes increasingly pressing. What supports should be in place for basic education? Should employers or industry organizations form strong relationships with high schools and/or community education programs? How can GED programs be made more available? What is the feasibility of vocational ESL classes?

The Role of Unions:

What effect do unions have on hiring, retention, and training? For instance, in some cases it seems that unions add to the stability of the work force because of the protection, solidarity, and certainty they provide workers. In other cases, union rules may be impediments to the success of new hires. What determines, overall, which role they will play? Which unions have a history of assisting entry-level workers? What kinds of relationships can/should be fostered between unions and other organizations?

The Role of Vocational/Technical Schools:

Trends in employment indicate that these institutes will be needed to provide much of the education required of workers in the upcoming decades. While one employer in the study reported satisfaction with the vocational education their employees have received, many others either had no contact at all or were dissatisfied with the vocational schools. How can these relationships be fostered? What must happen in order for vocational/technical schools to better serve employers' needs? How can they support placement and training?

The Role of Professional and Industry Organizations:

Professional and industry organizations, such as the Printing Institute of Minnesota, offer some training programs and support to business. What have they done that is successful? Are there good programs or practices that could be applied elsewhere?

Differences Between Large and Small Employers:

Businesses have different perspectives depending on many things, not the least of which is their size. How do the needs of large and small businesses differ? What do they have in common? Do employment and other resources tend to be geared toward one or the other? Can and should they form supportive relationships?

Community Connections:

Where might the stimulus come from for companies to become engaged in the surrounding community? What would it take for the industrial park to be less isolated from the surrounding neighborhood? How can its value to the neighborhood be strengthened and promoted? How can the potential for hiring local residents be realized? What kind of events or programs would encourage action in this direction?

Appendix A: Input from Local Retailers

This information was given by a focus group of small retailers from the Concord Street area as well as from members of the Smith-Dodd Business Association during their July business meeting.

What are some of the challenges your company is facing these days? [Probe re: employment]

Work ethic - showing up and leaving on time, showing a willingness to work, making long personal phone calls

We have to deal with the threat of sexual harassment and discrimination and disabilities, INS procedures, child support payments and for a small business it is overwhelming.

Day care is needed for workers.

Shoplifting.

Do you have a need for new employees? What are your turnover rates like? Do you have many long-term employees?

You have to go through a lot of people to get a stable employee.

We need someone who can figure out how to do a whole task, who doesn't need to be babysat or need hand holding. Too many employees have to be told how to do every little thing - they have no common sense.

Employee theft is also a problem.

How do you publicize jobs? Have you ever used any employment resources/agencies for placement? [Job Service/CLUES/temp agencies; neighborhood newspapers? job placement agencies?]

Word of mouth. Ads lead to riff raff or no response.

The people who go through the agencies don't seem like good workers. You have to pay a service fee or have it taken out of the employee's paycheck. Don't like the idea of a middle man.

In small businesses it is better to deal with people you know - they are going to have their hand in your till.

Do you have a training program? What is it?

We train or have an experienced employee train new people. But everybody wants to start at the top. They have unrealistic expectations. It takes two weeks before someone can be left alone in a store. You have to tell people how to do every little thing because they can't figure it out.

What kind of resources for employment would fit your needs? What is your wish list?

Reliable independent people. We need to let potential employees know the importance of work ethic.

I am disillusioned with employees. They need to learn things from prospective employers like how to fill out an application and how to go through an interview. That it is important to show up for work.

We need to come up with a way to expand the informal word of mouth referral. Work something out to give people job referrals. It would be good to get community organizations to meet with employers and talk about expectations. Connections are not getting made somehow. Sitting down face to face with potential employers to act as mentors for employees would be a really good thing. Face to face makes it more real, is more effective.

What topics would you be interested in for employer forums?

Discrimination, child support, INS requirements and procedures, work ethic, learning where to make referrals for all kinds of problems

Information on how to prevent shoplifting and how to handle potentially dangerous situations.

How to develop connections to community organizations who work with employment issues. Potential employees could even come in for half a day to learn what is expected on a job. Get a group of employers together to talk to people or community organizations to give information about working, interviewing, work ethic.

A directory would be great.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Date:

Company:

Person:

I. Descriptive

Q1. What does [name of company] do?

Q2. How long has it been on the West Side?

Q3. Is there a parent company?

Q4. What is your position here?

Q5. How many people work here?

Q6. Do you have other work sites?

Q7. Do you know how many of your employees live on the West Side? Have a guess?

II. Employer's Needs

Q8. What are some of the challenges your company is facing these days? [Probe re: employment]

Q9. Do you have a need for new employees? What are your turnover rates like? Do you have many long-term employees?

Q10. How do you publicize jobs? Have you ever used any employment resources/agencies for placement? [Job Service/CLUES/temp agencies; neighborhood newspapers? job placement agencies?]

Q11. What is your system for hiring? [Is it centralized?]

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Q12A. Do you have a training program? What is it?

Q12B. IF DO NOT TRAIN ON SITE ---> What support would you need to train within your company?

Q13A. Do you use any employee incentive programs?

Q13B. IF NO ----> Why not?
IF YES ----> What results have you had?

Q14A. Do you find skills to be lacking in applicants? IF NO, SKIP TO Q12. IF YES, CONTINUE.-

→ Q14B. Which skills? What are the gaps between applicants and what you would like new employees to know? These are challenging problems.

→ Q14C. Has [company] tried to address them? How? [language, cross cultural barriers]

Q15. What are the opportunities for advancement once someone is settled into a job?

Q16A. Have you ever used any other employment resources (for training or retention)? [Job Service/CLUES/temp agencies; training: TVI, Port Authority]

Q16B. IF NO ----> Why not?
IF YES ----> How did that go?

Q17. What kind of resources would fit your needs? What is your wish list?

Q18. What do you think it would take to move people from being low skill to being valuable employees?

Q19. What topics would you be interested in for employer forums?

Thank you for your help! I will send you a copy of the interview results. Are there any other resources REDA can help you with? [Leave REDA/WSN brochures if appropriate]

Appendix C: Sample Letters to Participants

The following letters are samples of letters sent to people who were willing to give some of their time to this project. Variations were made in the first paragraph of each letter in order to personalize it for each respondent. The letter which follows immediately was sent to those who gave a complete interview. The second letter was sent to those who were not able to schedule an interview, but who talked briefly on the phone at the time they were called. Participants who were not familiar with REDA also received a REDA brochure, and if appropriate, a WSEN brochure as well. The letters were printed on REDA letterhead.

Letter Sent After Interview Has Been Completed

July 15, 1997

[Name of Personnel Manager]
ABC Industries
200 West Side Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55107

Dear [Name of Personnel Manager]:

Thank you for taking time to talk with me about your company. It is interesting to learn about the diverse businesses in the industrial park, especially about those that are having so much success. Your input will serve to enrich the development and coordination of resources to support employers in the area.

You can expect to receive a summary of the results of the project in September, and you will be notified of any events that arise out of this work. Please find enclosed a brochure describing the West Side Employment Network.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the project supervisor, Jane Miller, at the Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA) office.

Sincerely,

Patricia Gladchild
Researcher

Letter Sent After Some Contact but Not Complete Interview

August 1, 1997

[Name of Personnel Manager]
XYZ Industries, Inc.
300 West Side Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55107

Dear [Name of Personnel Manager]:

Thank you for talking with me on the phone about your company. I will add the information you provided to the Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA) database. You will be invited to any events that arise out of this project on the employment and human resource needs of businesses in the industrial park.

Please find enclosed the brochures for the West Side Employment Network and REDA for your information.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Patricia Gladchild
Researcher

Appendix D: Interview Results

Since the purpose of this project was to learn as much as possible about employers in the industrial park, information from the partial interviews is included with the results of the complete interviews when appropriate and labeled separately when needed.

Description of Participants

The numbers in the following tables have been compiled from the answers to Q1-Q7. (See Appendix B, p. 21.)

Table 7: Types of Companies

| | <u>Complete Interview:</u> | <u>Partial Interview:</u> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Manufacturing/Industrial | 4 | 5 |
| Printing | 2 | 2 |
| Health Care Provider | 2 | 0 |
| Distributor | 2 | 0 |
| Warehouse | 0 | 2 |
| Medical | 0 | 2 |
| Other ¹¹ | 3 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 13 | 14 |

¹¹ Other industries include: engineering, industrial retail, delivery, aviation, recycling, and glass repair.

Table 8: Years on the West Side¹²

| <u>Years:</u> | <u>Complete Interview:</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1-10 | 3 |
| 11-20 | 3 |
| 21-30 | 3 |
| 31-40 | 1 |
| 41-50 | 0 |
| 51-60 | 0 |
| 61-70 | 0 |
| 71-80 | 0 |
| 81-90 | 0 |
| 91-100 | 1 |
| 101-110 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 12 ¹³ |

Table 9: Ownership of Company

| | <u>Complete Interview:</u> | <u>Partial Interview:</u> |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| No parent company | 13 | 9 |
| Have a parent company | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 13 | 9 ¹⁴ |

¹² This information was not collected in the partial interviews.¹³ One respondent was not able to provide this information.¹⁴ This information was not obtained from five respondents.

Table 10: Staff Position of Respondents

| | <u>Complete Interview:</u> | <u>Partial Interview:</u> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Human resource staff person | 4 | 0 |
| Office/general/production manager | 7 ¹⁵ | 11 |
| Vice president/president | 2 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 13 | 12¹⁶ |

Table 11: Number of Employees

| <u>Number of Employees:</u> | <u>Complete Interview:</u> | <u>Partial Interview:</u> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1-99 | 6 | 10 |
| 100-199 | 4 | 2 |
| 200-299 | 1 | 0 |
| 300-399 | 0 | 0 |
| 400-499 | 1 | 0 |
| 500-599 | 1 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 13 | 12¹⁷ |

¹⁵ Two of these respondents reported that their company had a human resource department at another site.

¹⁶ This information was not obtained from two respondents.

¹⁷ This information was not obtained from two respondents.

Table 12: Location of Work Sites

| | <u>Complete Interview:</u> | <u>Partial Interview:</u> |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| No other work sites | 5 | 5 |
| Other local sites | 3 | 1 |
| Site(s) outside of Minnesota | 5 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 13 | 7¹⁸ |

Table 13: Number of Respondents with a Unionized Workplace

| | <u>Complete Interview:</u> | <u>Partial Interview:</u> |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Unionized | 6 | 4 |
| Not Unionized | 7 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 13 | 8¹⁹ |

¹⁸ This information was not obtained from seven respondents.

¹⁹ This information was not obtained from six respondents.

Employers' Concerns and Needs

The text that follows is compiled from edited interview notes from both complete and partial interviews.

Q8. *What are some of the challenges your company is facing these days? [Probe re: employment]*

The marketplace is constantly changing. We have to remain focused on the future all the time in order to make sure we can make money not only today but in the future. It is a challenging economic situation. More specifically regarding employees - we need experienced sales staff. We use inside sales (telemarketing). We provide training to sell products, but we prefer to not train people how to sell on the phone.

Property taxes. Property taxes are killing us. This is our main business concern.

Buses don't run for the last shift unless the workers walk over to Robert St. in the middle of the night in the dark and cold. Busses used to run so that the second shift could catch one to downtown, but now the last bus comes by just after 8:00 [p.m.].

Lay off periods are a challenge for retaining employees. Union rules mean we have to let new hires go. Layoffs can be from two weeks to seven months. The contract says we will recall all employees but many may have found another job. The incentive for permanent employment is lacking here. The layoffs are a big problem for permanent employees.

We're always seeking to expand our customer base. It is an international business. We sell a lot of equipment to businesses all over the world.

Competition is really our main challenge these days. It is a very competitive business. Increasing costs make it hard to hold our costs down.

Financial health of the company - had some layoffs in the early 90s. Some of it is changing technology. Some of it is big guys eating up little guys. They have new, faster, bigger equipment. We have one and a half shifts, and the big companies have three shifts so they get more out of their fixed costs. It is a very competitive business. You need to be super-aggressive and creative in marketing.

Property taxes here are very high. If the company had moved to Woodbury we would not have had any property taxes for ten years, and here we pay \$80,000 per year. But the owners feel a loyalty to St. Paul because of the history.

Getting more business. We are a fully automated shop so we can handle a lot of work.

Finding a good work force is the biggest thing. We want people with a strong work ethic, who will show up for work 40 hours a weeks.

Acquiring and keeping good people. We just had two retirements and one person quit, so that is a quarter of our work force.

Recruiting is certainly a struggle.

Finding bodies for entry-level jobs at 8.00/hour, 15-25 hours/week, odd shifts.

Growth! The business has doubled in the last five year. The industry has had problems with a lot of buying and merging. This company came through with a strong emphasis on customer service and high quality products and an aggressive sales staff. It really served us well.

We could use more business. Would be interested in info on a small business loan.

We have a large number of non-English speaking patients and would like to have bilingual staff. We hire interpreters for all our non-English speaking patients and it is a huge expense. We would like to have more bilingual staff to improve communication. We cannot require it because we are a unionized employer and it is not in the job description.

We are having an increased demand for services. We have a lot of demand and have trouble providing service with the amount of space we have. Regarding employment, we do get qualified applicants but I would like to have a bigger pool. It is difficult to get clerical staff for the evening hours.

Q9. Do you have a need for new employees? What are your turnover rates like? Do you have many long-term employees?

We are always taking applications and will review them when something opens up. There is about 50 percent turnover; the working conditions are difficult and some people just can't handle it. Entry-level general laborer jobs pay \$9.00/hour. We do not require GED. It is not a union shop.

We have no employment problems.

We hire designers and engineers. Many of the designers have technical experience. We have very low turnover.

We have trouble filling entry-level warehouse positions. We have long-term employees too, but we just have trouble getting applicants for entry-level openings. We have had trouble with new hires being unreliable workers. We do not require high school education or a GED but they must have some math aptitude. English is not absolutely necessary but they need some way to communicate with drivers.

Finding people in customer service is very difficult.

We have high turnover. I hold three open houses a year where people come and turn in their applications and I interview them right there. We do have a pool of established long term

workers. The problem is getting the new worker to get past that lay off period (about two years). I do believe we have a lot to offer employees. We need people with reading and writing ability, who can follow directions, and are good at communication. We need bilingual group leaders. We should send people to learn Spanish but the company will not pay for language skills. We also employ some people who are hearing impaired.

Finding sales people is extremely hard. We need established people, otherwise it takes one and a half years to train and groom them on how to make contacts. And they have to know something about the business. We have a new sales person starting and I am nervous that we will get more work and I will have trouble finding people to support it, but I haven't had any trouble because I haven't been looking. We have long-term employees. We have someone here now who works part-time as he is phasing in retirement and he started here when he was a teenager.

We are small and have very low turnover. We have extremely good retention at all skill levels.

We have about 50 employees and do not have much turnover or much trouble filling positions.

Turnover rates are very low for people leaving the company - about four or five people a year actually stop working here and leave. But entry-level positions have turnover as people move up. We don't mind turnover if it is for promotion. This is a union employer, so we have a lot of advancement within the company. Transcription is the one thing that we are always recruiting for. It is always in demand.

We have no employment problems.

No, we don't really have a need for new employees. There is no turnover. We have people who have been here for 30-40 years.

Our turnover is very low. It is a very stable work force, but we always need experienced sales people. People need to be able to develop rapport and build lasting relationships. We want to develop customers who are going to stay with us permanently. It is tricky to identify potential employees. We have diverse education and life experience in our employees. It just takes a certain something. We have profiled our top five employees to determine what the most important traits are and we will be able to use that for hiring new employees with similar traits. And we can see how one characteristic may be compensated for by this other trait, etc.

We have a union shop and a very stable work force. Sometimes when it gets really busy we have trouble filling factory jobs; it is simple repetitive work.

Many of our employees are very long-term, and turnover is pretty low, but because we are so small even losing two or three people really makes a difference. We don't really have any entry-level positions because everybody has to be able to pitch in and help on other jobs. We only hire people who have some knowledge about the industry.

Because of how the industry is, the production levels have some valleys so we have periodic

layoffs when our orders are cut back. We use temporary workers, sometimes for long periods, and then have to lay them off and try to find good replacements when it is time to hire them back.

Entry-level jobs pay 8.00/hour to start with no experience. Applicants have to be willing to work, be mechanically inclined, and want to learn and grow. We do not require GED but applicants have to pass a test for basic math and reading skills

This is a promote from within company. Just about everyone who works here in management came up through the company. So really it is just the entry-level jobs that are hard to fill. We have some turnover, but a lot of long-term employees.

We have very low turnover. Our newest employee has been here four years. No one has quit for years and years. We have a union shop.

We hired 4-5 people a month for a while. We increased the staff by fourteen last July. Back in the 1980s we had people lined up in the lobby from one newspaper ad. Now we get 10 applications in a week. There just are not the numbers there used to be. We do not have much turnover. People don't quit just to quit. A few years ago when we implemented the team concept we had a wave of people leaving because some people just don't like that approach. But since then it has been very stable. We have a good profit-sharing plan, good wages (8.92/hr to start plus shift differential of .20 second shift and .35 third shift), and a union shop.

We are a small union shop with very low turnover. The workforce in both the office and the shop is very stable.

Turnover comes in streaks. It is probably 20-25 employees a year. There is a very stable base of long-term employees. Starting wage is around \$8.00/hour for entry-level jobs.

Q10. How do you publicize jobs? Have you ever used any employment resources/agencies for placement? [Job Service/CLUES/temp agencies; neighborhood newspapers? job placement agencies?]

We have not tapped into vo-tech programs. I question whether they understand the level of sophistication we need.

We use the newspapers (Mpls./St. Paul), word of mouth, may consider bonuses for recruiting, relatives make recommendations. We have used search firms for higher level positions, but we haven't used agencies for factory level jobs. We do send job announcements to Job Service, but we have never had any good luck with the applicants we get through them. They have all turned out to be troublesome employees.

We use everything available: internal postings, state listings, minority agencies, newspapers. We post the engineering positions at colleges.

Word of mouth. We have advertised in journals and newspapers, but word of mouth has

worked the best for us, through vendors or friends and acquaintances. Before I was hired they used some private agency and hired two of people through them, but that's it.

We use the tech schools for composers, typesetters, printing, and graphics. We also use a lot of word of mouth. People who are related work here. Internal postings. We have used temp agencies and I send job descriptions to Jobs in Training.

We use word of mouth through friends, the internal posting system, community and employment agencies, and the community and local papers as a last resort. The only positions we hire outside for are entry-level positions.

This is all handled by the corporate office.

I use the Star Tribune because I can afford to put out only one ad and it has to be where it will reach the most people. We get a good flow of applicants for entry-level positions. I hired an entry-level person recently and had 12 applicants and they were good quality. We have used head hunters for sales jobs. Customer service people are hard to get. Companies recruit from other companies, so you can lose people that way and have it be hard to get another.

We put ads in the paper and that is adequate. No need to use other places.

I have used Job Service and it was up and down. The temp agencies have some problems, too, but at least they screen the people they send over.

Posting and screening of applicants is all handled by the corporate office.

We have used a temporary agency. I used Job Service once and applicants were not satisfactory. They might have been able to do the job but they did not present themselves that way. We will be on the internet in a few weeks and that opens new possibilities.

We are out there everywhere trying to fill jobs. Everybody is working hard to get the word out.

Newspapers, Job Service, Lakeland Academy, La Presna, post internally, word of mouth. I haven't had much satisfaction with Job Service, though it has worked well at other places I have worked. A current goal is to have a recruitment plan for each position, to develop targeted recruiting.

We use the newspaper primarily but may wind up using agencies.

Q11. What is your system for hiring? [Is it centralized?]

Handled by HR department.

It is a small company. One person handles it.

We do most of our hiring from the temp pools. That way the employees can check out and we can check them out. We have a good reputation at the temp agencies and workers want to come here. It is air conditioned, clean, and a good work environment. Many workers know that there is the possibility that it will evolve into full-time work. There is a time period of 12-24 weeks that the employee has to work for the temp agency before we can hire them. We use three different agencies because one would not be able to give us the kind of worker we want in the numbers we want. Entry-level jobs pay 6.75-7.00/hour for assembly and packaging.

I (controller) handle all the hiring along with the supervisor of the department that is hiring.

There are three human resource staff people for the company. I handle all recruiting. Sometimes there may be one day notice to get employees during rush season. The overhead of recruiting and hiring is huge. Out of 50 applicants you may get five who will want to work. The jobs are highly repetitive, there are layoffs, and there is only a 20 minute lunch period. It is paid, but it is only 20 minutes and some people just don't like that. And with union rules a new employee will have to work any shift, as needed.

All hiring is handled by the corporate office. The interview and hiring decisions are on site, but applications are submitted to the central office and all the screening and testing is done there. We have almost all union positions, so most positions are filled by seniority. Almost everyone enters the organization at entry-level.

Handled at the corporate office.

The vice president handles the personnel and hiring.

It is handled through the company's HR dept.

The president handles all the hiring, but that is only because that is how it has always been handled. He is on the verge of hiring someone to make sure they do everything according to regulations.

We can be slow in hiring. Applicants take a test when they interview to see what their work ethic is like, their morale, attendance. Then if that is okay they will be interviewed by the facilitator (supervisor) plus two people from the floor. This is to see how they get along with people and whether they could work as part of a team. If they pass that (a lot of people drop out here) they take a general intelligence test. If that goes through we do a background check, then they have to have a physical with a drug test. If they pass all of that they are offered a job. The whole process may be as quick as five days, but it is often longer. The thorough hiring process helps with retention. Many people seem to like the team approach. New hires all work second or third shift.

The administrative manager handles all the paperwork for all the hiring; the supervisor handles interviews and selection.

Q12A. *Do you have a training program? What is it?*

We do some training on site and use training provided by outside vendors for using specific equipment.

People come trained because it is required by the state that applicants already have license/certificate. We provide continuing education time and money and the usual on the job training, maybe something with computers.

All of our people are cross-trained so they can fill in on other machines when needed. We do that training here.

Most employees come trained. We do offer opportunities to improve skills, especially in computer training, diversity, career assessment, and personal development.

We train for selling our product, but do not train how to do sales.

We train on site.

We need to improve on training. Training for a specific department is short-term. Group leaders help new employees. They just use their common sense - there is no training in how to teach/train new employees. With the high turnover they get tired of training and have an attitude sometimes. The company doesn't want to pay for training. They do not want any time spent away from production.

Informal - we hire people with experience because it takes a long time to learn about the products.

We train on site. There are no vo-tech training programs that are applicable.

They don't train them at the vo-tech. We have to train on site. Vo-techs put out desktop publishers. We are forced to train on site. Technical schools have to take the ball and run with the future! They teach people the creative part but not what they need to know for production.

Our emphasis is on developing technology so that the work requires less skill on the part of entry-level employees.

We need to do a better job of training. We would like to have a training space set up on the floor so new people could practice. As it is now they go right to the department and work on the floor and start producing and there is some concern about quality.

We train for this company but only hire people with knowledge about the industry.

Q12B. *IF DO NOT TRAIN ON SITE ---> What support would you need to train within your company?*

We would have to hire a full time person for the job, or hire an outside agency to handle it, who would then train how to develop relationships and teach how to contact people.

Company will not pay for training.

We have just been reluctant because the cost is so high. People are beginning to see now, though, that it is very important.

Q13A. *Do you use any employee incentive programs?*

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Do have incentive program | 9 |
| Do not have incentive program | 4 |

Q13B. *IF NO ----> Why not?*

Management is not interested.

We are a unionized employer.

IF YES ----> What results have you had?

People stay here because they can make a lot of money and certain people love this kind of work.

Sometimes it has good results, but the bonuses are hard to get.

We have very high quality products and a very stable work force. People seem to think it is a good place to work.

Q14A. *Do you find skills to be lacking in applicants?*

Skills are not lacking.

No.

No. We target experienced people, and that is who applies. There is a narrow band width of people who can do this job and enjoy it. It is a competitive business and people have to work hard. There is lots of disappointment - you have to have a thick skin and lots of courage.

No.

No.

Not really - Most of the time people are pretty well qualified.

Not really - we just need applicants. We have to have some bilingual staff, and we need people to work evening hours. Our recruitment plan means that we are developing contacts with community organizations who can refer bilingual people. We want to develop those relationships with community centers. We need a resource for developing those contacts.

I feel you can't really make a statement until they've tried the job. We don't discriminate and we work with employees in any way we can. We have people who have worked here 6-7 times. We have quite a few Spanish speaking employees, most of them are bilingual. I listen to language audio-tapes in my car so I can learn to understand them better. We need translated safety posters because the employees who do not read English are not currently getting the right to know OSHA notices.

Skills are lacking

Yes. Showing up on time and leaving on time; taking the designated break and only the designated break; not walking off the job; actually working. It is an attitude. The company hasn't tried to deal with these issues. We have had a Spanish speaking family working here. One had good English, one could understand English but not speak it, and the other three could not understand it. I assigned them to work together and it worked pretty well. But they got laid off and did not come back.

Just the overall work ethic. Sometimes once someone walks in the door they want to know what the company is going to do for them without trying to further themselves or prove what they can do. They expect something for nothing. The second thing is that some people have unstable personal lives and are so burdened by problems in their families that they have trouble with attendance. We try to be flexible and never say no if someone needs time off for a family problem, but it gets frustrating for the employee because they feel like they can't get ahead because they are so burdened. About 10 percent of our work force is southeast Asian, particularly Hmong. It has been a problem at times. We use bilingual employees to help out, and most of the workers understand English pretty well but have trouble communicating with their supervisors. Hmong and Spanish are the two we get.

We are just having trouble getting bodies for entry-level jobs. I know there are non-English speakers who could do the jobs but they have to be able to read the specs. Our customers keep track of quality on a monthly basis. The specs have to be followed correctly. It is critical that they can interpret and understand the specs. [Open to discussing English classes specifically geared toward employment.]

Yes. About two out of nine applicants will make it through the process. Interviewing skills are very poor. People don't show interest or ability or don't show a willingness to work in teams. Some people don't finish the initial survey. It seems they have reading problems and we need people who can read well. We do require a GED or high school diploma. We have a six week probationary period and about one in five don't make it. I know there are Spanish speaking people who would be good workers, but we have the emphasis on team work, so speaking English is a part of the job. Our tuition reimbursement program would without question reimburse for language classes, but they need to be able to speak English on the job right away. We would need to figure out how to get them going. I will check to see if our tests come in Spanish. We do have some bilingual workers but we would not want to pull them away from production. Doing more outreach to women would be good.

The skills are just not there. People need simple communication skills: reading; writing; legible penmanship; spelling; grammar; basic education.

Q15. What are the opportunities for advancement once someone is settled into a job?

We like to promote from within and find that it is a wonderful way to retain employees. I don't know why any company wouldn't do that.

There are lots of opportunities for advancement once someone is hired because we are pushing people to the max right now so they are learning a lot and will be in a good position to move into an area where we need help.

It is based on seniority.

Entry-level workers can move from entry-level \$8.00/hour job to \$9.00/hour job if they study.

There is a training station with computer monitors available that have a program to learn the job. This is a promote from within company.

We have accelerated wage increases so that in two years the wages will go up 50 percent.

There are increases up to a \$1.00/hour based on attitude, performance, meeting quota, and attendance. It is discretionary by the supervisor. Wages go up quickly after earning time, but the struggle is getting people to stay through the lay offs for two years.

We have a feeder system. We are a site for a four year apprenticeship program through the union.

There are higher jobs they can advance to. There is an internal application process and we look at attendance, job record, they go through another team interview. This is a new direction our company is going.

We get people who are hired in entry-level jobs and then move up when a better one opens up.

16A. *Have you ever used any other employment resources (for training or retention)? [Job Service/CLUES/temp agencies; training: TVI, Port Authority]*

Some of our designers have had their training in CAD (computer assisted design) at the vo-tech, though they usually have some other experience before we hire them. My impression of the vo-tech is good overall.

We have never had any training on site through the technical institute or union. The company will not allow anything that detracts from production.

No.

We send all our new people up to the vo-tech for one specific course. The instructor is poor.
I am not satisfied with the course.

People come trained from the vo tech schools and they do a fine job. The industry organization also has huge training calendars, so we could use that if we needed to. We could put together a good training program. But we have to do most of our training ourselves. There just is no other way.

No - no need.

We get employees from other sales firms. I am not aware of any training that is applicable, but haven't looked into it either.

We have talked with instructors at the St. Paul technical school to ask them to come and do some training here with our workers but it didn't work out because of lost production. It is very costly.

Q17. *What kind of resources would fit your needs? What is your wish list?*

We have done a good job of developing our own support network within the industry. Something the community could do that would support us is work to get reliable day care in the area. Our employees work odd shifts, which many people like, but that can be a problem for day care. Need both quality and availability. Also, the bus service is not good enough anymore. It doesn't make sense that they cut it back. The ridership here is obviously good. I did call about it but it had no effect.

Find more people who can sell! People who can sell on the phone, who have "it".

We are a small company and we need information on human resources in general. For instance, about the Disability Act, and federal and state requirements regarding human resources. Human resources are our most important resource, yet we do not have a department or specialist. Maybe we could partner with larger organizations to learn from them to help us keep up so we could benefit from what they do. We could draw on businesses right here in the community and have presentations to learn from each other.

Child care is a huge problem. It must be available in an affordable way. I would love to see local day care available for all shifts. We have spouses who work here on different shifts.

Fix the bus schedule. Teach work ethic. Support people somehow through the layoffs.

Money! Additional business contacts, getting our name out there.

Bilingual skills - interpreters are a huge expense.

Within the neighborhood we would like to see more inexpensive child care options because child care inhibits working consistently.

Education about cultures in the area. For instance, why do some people prefer to be called Latino and others Hispanic?

Need help with translating signs and posters.

I can't really think of anything. We just always need good workers with a strong work ethic.

Someone to contact, a feeder system for employees.

Transportation. This is our biggest problem because of our location and the hours. This has to come from the community. This company is not in a position where it is going to start providing transportation. What about the busses that churches have, that are not in use during the week? Could those somehow be used to get people to work?

We need more people with high school diplomas or GEDs. We need to encourage people to stay in high school and to make the GED more available. We have contacted high schools and had tours to promote manufacturing as a career, but they have had mixed success. For a lot of students they just want a day off school and do not pay attention. We just have not been able to get things going with vo-tech schools. I haven't heard that child care is a problem. We do have 30-40 percent women employees, but many of them are older.

Getting updated information on employment laws, regulations, employment practices, list of resources and/or publications (inexpensive ones) where I can get information on city, state, and federal requirements. Employer support services. Notification about changes in procedures for regulations.

1) Anything to do with human resources. 2) Marketing support of any kind. We can't devote an individual to marketing but we need more of it. 3) Basic referrals and contacts in the industrial park. When we need a good lawyer, where do we find one? If I knew other employers in the industrial park I would ask them. And I drive around and see that other businesses use products we distribute, but do we have connections with them? No. We just don't know them.

What about riverfront development? I don't see these businesses as fitting in with the mayor's plans for that. What is the future of the industrial park? What kind of lobbying voice do we have? Does this area have a voice? Will the industrial park last? It is scary. And how many of us have the same landlord? Are we getting equal, fair treatment by the landlords? We need a voice.

Q18. What do you think it would take to move people from being low skill to being valuable employees?

Training in work ethic. Interviewing skills is a big one. Behavior and appropriate dress (This applies to both office and factory applicants). Little things count in the interviews like saying yes and no instead of yeah, yup, etc. Chewing and snapping gum is not appropriate, making eye contact is important. I've even had high or drunk applicants. The training could start in high school. They teach home economics, why not work economics? We generally require a high school diploma or GED, but do not always require it. When the push is really on we will let it go.

I think a lot of it has to do with an individual's home environment and poor role models. As to what we can do, it is hard to say. Some people really want to get a job and keep it but personal problems make it hard for them to progress. They get discouraged. They are all social problems. I don't know what should be done about it.

They need education on how to present themselves, basic skills (math, reading), the demonstrated desire to work and learn.

They have to get that GED or high school diploma.

Basic education. Reading, writing, communication skills.

Q19. What topics would you be interested in for employer forums?

I don't have any particular need but would definitely like to know about future forums.

I would like to attend but we need at least a month minimum for notice of meetings or forums. Larger companies need more notice. My calendar is filled several weeks in advance.

Retaining employees; TRAINING at all levels, especially supervisors.

I don't know right off the top of my head but would like to know about future forums.

Insurance, workers comp, employee benefits, environmental issues, property taxes in Ramsey County, support for small businesses who need a boost in the form of grants or loans, a directory sounds great, too.

No specific topics, but would like to know who our neighbors are and get to know other businesses in the area. I would like to be able to make referrals for customers to other businesses in the area.

No specific topics but would definitely like to get flyers. I am interested in attending.

Employee retention. If we can get people to work here six months, then chances are they will stay for a while. We need to get people to stay here long enough to take advantage of the opportunities.

No specific topics but would be interested in attending forums.

It is important for employers in the industrial park to get to know one another, I don't know the people in the companies right around here. We really have little opportunity to meet each other.

I need updates on procedures for dealing with regulations. Something like that would be of interest. Ideas for recognition programs for staff other than a plaque or certificate - something innovative. How to conduct performance evaluations of employees.

HR, legal, marketing/promotion